

Today marks the anniversary of the ratification of the 15th Amendment to the U.S. constitution. This was a major step towards equality in our nation's history, granting suffrage to men of color. While this amendment alone did not eradicate discrimination or guarantee equality, its importance is undeniable as it was the first acknowledgement of citizen rights for men of color and former slaves.

As we continue to celebrate Black History Month throughout February, it is important that we remember monumental moments like this in which our nation decided to take proactive steps towards equality for all. The 15th Amendment was the last of three Reconstruction Amendments which sought to provide equal rights and end discrimination against former slaves and other persons of color. The first of these Reconstruction Amendments was the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery and the anniversary of the signing of the 13th Amendment was celebrated on Monday as part of National Freedom Day.

We pay homage today to these amendments and other historic pieces of legislation which aimed to promote and protect equality for all. And as we reflect on these achievements, we must also recognize that the battle for equality and protection of civil rights is not over. This is a struggle I have continually advocated on behalf of as an attorney, former federal judge, and now Member of Congress. Rest assured, I will remain dedicated to the promotion and protection civil and human rights both here at home and abroad.